

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

James M. Thomas
Commissioner

Lieutenant Edwin S. Henion
Chief of Staff

February 15, 2011

Rep. Stephen Dargan, Co-Chairman
Sen. Joan Hartley, Co-Chairman
Public Safety and Security Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

HB 5802 AN ACT ADOPTING CERTAIN SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THOMAS COMMISSION

The Department of Public Safety supports this bill.


This proposed bill would adopt in statute certain safety measures recommended by the Thomas Commission in response to the explosion and resulting loss of life which took place on February 7, 2010, at the Kleen Energy construction site in Middletown, Connecticut.

First and foremost, the proposed bill would ban by statute the use of flammable gases to conduct "gas blows". It became clear in hearings before the Thomas Commission that it is not necessary to use flammable gas in the gas blows used for cleaning at a gas to energy plant. Other gases such as nitrogen or even compressed air can serve the same function. The public safety risk entirely outweighs the easy availability of flammable gas for this purpose.

Secondly, the bill would require that each person applying for a certificate to build an electric generating facility pay for (A) at least one special inspector to assist the municipal fire marshal in providing plan review and conducting inspections during construction, and (B) the training of local fire marshals on the issues involved in construction. These important steps will ensure that Connecticut has in place the needed expertise for public safety oversight of these facilities. The special inspector will provide the needed expert assistance to any municipal fire marshal in whose jurisdiction an applicant wants to build an electric generating facility. Further, such applicants will be required to pay into the existing statutory code training fund so that all fire marshals can get training on the issues involved in construction of an electric generating facility.

Lastly, the bill would require the Connecticut Siting Council to (A) consult with and solicit written comments from the Departments of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Public Safety, Consumer Protection and Public Works, and the Labor Department in addition to the state agencies listed in subsection (h) of 16-50j of the general statutes, and (B) create a coordinating council to serve during construction composed of at least one representative from each of the agencies listed in subparagraph (A) of this subdivision. This will provide the necessary statutory framework for necessary communication among the various entities that are stakeholders in regard to public safety oversight of these projects.

Sincerely,



James M. Thomas
COMMISSIONER